

# **12 Ways to A Happy Marriage Life**

## **The Lifelong Marriage**

**By**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Every couple enters into the world of marriage with a dream of a happy ever after. They feel the depth of their love for each other will run over every other thing and will have no power to cause unhappiness in the marriage. But in reality, the in-love obsession is short-lived and you will soon wonder why on earth you never saw the most obvious faults in your spouse. A happy marriage is a result of hard work from each spouse from the onset. Which is the better way, to have a good start and running of your marriage or through quality preparation? Love brought you together but a conscious and continuous effort to make marriage successful is needed.

This guide will give you the 12 most practical ways to pave for you the paths to happy marriage life. We will cover premarital counseling, have a mentor couple, begin to think 'us' instead of 'I', discuss marriage expectations, discuss future goals as a married couple, setting values and standards for your future marriage, be the change that you want to see in your relationship, initiate and follow through your commitment, start serving each other now, keep doing the things that first attracted you to each other, communicate love effectively and finally discuss and agree on the most essential topics in marriage.

## **CHAPTER 1: ATTEND PREMARITAL COUNSELLING**

As a single person, you can only admire marriage from a distance. The married folks seem to be enjoying life; they seem to be lying in green pastures. Well, you have never been there and you have no idea what it takes to make a happy marriage. Since you do not want to be caught by surprise, premarital counseling comes in handy to enhance your readiness for marriage.

Premarital education before marriage provides a platform for you and your partner to talk through real challenges in marriage before they ever come up and what to do when they come; because you are sure to face most of them. You may not see the whole sense of it at the moment, but it will be sensible down the road. Premarital counseling is designed to help you succeed in marriage right from the start; it sets you on the right foot for a happy married life.

It has been emphasized repeatedly, that marriage takes commitment and hard work. That is very true. Now that both of you are committed to a lifetime relationship, it is time to sharpen your skills on hard work. Your hard work can only pay if it is channeled in the right direction; you want to work hard on what will bear fruit. Premarital counseling unveils the major issues in marriage that affect happiness therein and walks you through how you can work smart in those areas and enjoy a happy marriage thereafter.

These are the topics covered in premarital counseling. These topics will be discussed in-depth in the last chapter:

### **Communication**

Communication is the biggest pillar in marriage on which every other pillar is leaning on. Every issue in marriage can be resolved through communication. You must realize that there is no escape; marriage is about communication and lots of it. A happy marriage is built on deep, transparent and healthy conversations that are done often. The moment communication ends in marriage, then that is the end of that marriage. I believe at this point you are convinced that communication is everything for a happy marriage.

Communication entails decision making, conversations to continually enhance your relationship and conflict resolution. In marriage there will be many decisions to be made and many conflicts to be resolved than you expect. Plan beforehand how you will keep communication alive and healthy in your marriage. Write down strategies now that you can reference to in the future when needs arises.

### **Family planning**

Premarital counselling will take through discussions on family planning. You need to discuss the size of your family before you get married. Agree on the family planning option you want to adopt and the number of children you want to bring up.

## **Finances and career**

Finances and career is another topic discussed in premarital counselling. Money matters are yet another big rated cause of unhappy marriages and even divorce! Understand the difference in your spending habits and agree on how you are going to raise and spend your money.

## **Roles in marriage**

A happy marriage is a result of mutual contribution. There are roles to be divided. Premarital counselling helps you see the roles in marriage and you are able to decide how you are going to handle those roles.

## **Affection and sex**

Strong intimacy builds a healthy relationship between a couple which leads to happy marriage. Counselling will guide you through what affection and sex in marriage should be like and how to keep intimacy alive even as you age. Sex is not everything in marriage but without it there is no marriage. Have honest conversations on expectations and desires for your sex life.

## **Beliefs and values**

You are coming together as two different people with different values and want to become one; it is challenging. The in-love obsession may blind you from seeing the major difference in your values which can break your marriage in the future. Premarital counselling helps you discuss major issues on which your values should match. It takes you out of the fantasy world to investigate real life issues on beliefs and values.

## **Family and friends**

We agree that when you get married your friends and family members do not stop being what they are now. You need to discuss and set boundaries on the extent they can reach in your marriage. Agree on the place of extended family in your marriage and the friends who you might have to cut off.

## **Faith**

Faith matters a lot in marriage. If you are of different faiths, discuss how you are going to handle that in a way to keep your marriage happy (this can be challenging) and if you are of the same faith, discuss the standards you want to keep as a couple.

## **Action Points**

- Look for a premarital counseling class to attend
- Engage your counselor
- Intensely discuss the guided topics

## **CHAPTER 2: HAVE A MENTOR COUPLE**

More often, couples believe they are okay until a crisis hits them and they realize they have not been doing well. Mentorship is about finding a couple that has enough marriage experience you can tap from. In your journey towards a happy marriage, you need a happy married couple to take you by the hand; to model for you what needs to be done and what not to be done to bring out a happy marriage. This will go a long way in helping you avoiding common marriage potholes thus making your journey lighter.

So how do you find a mentor couple? Look for a couple who have the kind of love you would like to have. There are those specifics that indicate a couple in love. Observe couples around you who can model such love; it may not be completely but at least to a good percentage. Secondly, look for a couple you have something in common with. Some situations have unique pressures in marriage. It could be in terms of career, cross cultural marriage, and health among others. Such things in common will make your walk more real and you can identify with them strongly. Finally, you should be able to reach them physically and they are willing to walk with you. It will be more effective to be mentored one on one because you can see them go through issues of life successfully unlike mentorship from a distance.

These are ways a mentor couple will help you:

### **A mentor couple will speak truth over you**

Sympathy has never helped anyone, but truth has! I know truth can rub you in the wrong way but sometimes all we need is someone to tell us as it is. Since you chose a couple who has the best interest for you and your relationship, they will do this with grace and love, with an aim of bringing the best from your relationship. Also, because they are experienced, they know how specific ideas or ways can have negative effects. They will point at where you are going wrong when you cannot see it for yourself. Then redirect you to the path leading to a happy marriage. They will be the eyes of your relationship when love blinds you. There are decisions you will need experienced truth to make, they will be of help. Thus, you will not fall into deadly pits.

### **They will help you identify and set priorities**

You can have right priorities but in the wrong order which equally yields no fruit. As you set for marriage, you need to have your priorities right from the word go. A mentor couple will help you identify what makes a happy marriage; the values, habits, actions and mindsets. After that, they will help you rearrange how you do things with respect to the identified values and to pursue a happy marriage on the right track.

### **You can learn from both their successes and failures**

You do not have to try everything and fail or succeed in order to learn. A mentor couple will graciously open their private life to you, and you will be able to learn from them. You will

understand what causes bad results and how to avoid them and what should be done to get your desired results. Without a mentor couple, you will waste most of your time in marriage finding the right track and thus delay enjoying happiness in marriage. You can adjust appropriately before getting there.

### **They can track your progress**

A mentor couple acts as an accountability partner. Your mentor couple will walk you through your relationship journey and regularly check on how you are doing. Even as you prepare for marriage, they are aware of your preparedness and can work on ensuring each day you are more ready for marriage. They track how you are currently adapting to values and habits of a good marriage. They will continually assess you; thus making you more ready each day.

### **You will have access to hard-earned wisdom**

They say grey hair is a sign of wisdom. The fact that they are ahead of you means they have more wisdom and insights than you. You probably have your own understanding of how a happy marriage is made; a mentor couple will shade light and wisdom that contradict with any negative ideology. They will give you wisdom that can be given by experience alone, which you cannot have in your current status. This wisdom will keep you on the right track and propel your relationship into the direction of a happy marriage.

### **Action Points**

- Identify and approach a mentor couple
- Be open with them
- Honor their counsel and guidance



### **CHAPTER 3: BEGIN TO THINK 'US' INSTEAD OF 'I'**

Among the tremendous changes that come with marriage is a sudden change of 'me' to 'us'. There is no longer a word such as me, I and myself since the two became one. There is no longer such a phrase as my money, my space, my time or my body either; it all becomes our money, our space, our time and our bodies respectively. There is mutual belonging of what was originally individually owned. And anytime a partner will refer to themselves as individuals than as a couple, there is tension that happens in that relationship; and thus it must be avoided in a marriage. It might be tough shifting from 'I' to 'us' overnight and thus is good to begin to change your thinking to accommodate both of you as early as now. Instead of thinking of you as an individual in the relationship, begin to think of you as a couple. This will help in getting rid of selfishness in marriage where each couple is thinking of their needs first. Thinking of 'us' in place of 'I' will set your hearts on the best interests of the other and thus selfless love is build which will result in a happy marriage.

These are things you can do to enhance your shift from 'I' to 'us':

#### **Explore common interests**

There are always common interests between any couple. What do you have in common with your fiancé? Identify the things that bring you much joy and intimacy whenever you do. List them and begin to pursue them regularly. These could include; music, cycling, sports, art, adventure or mountain climbing among others. It is easy to have the best interest for your partner in activities you are both crazy about. They will not only be bonding and fun moments, but they will help you understand each other's most joyful moments and you will learn how to enhance that for them. Secondly, pursuing common interests will help you have things to share together; ideas to share and topics to talk about. Sharing ideas will tune your thinking from an individual point of view to plural. You will often want to know what they think about an idea.

#### **Invest together**

Assuming that both of you have committed permanently to each other, investing together as you approach marriage will help you think as a couple than as an individual. Investing together will mean more time together, more sharing of ideas and views, more understanding and giving in, which will definitely remove any selfishness. You will have to think in a way that will bring profits to your investment, which means thinking as a team and as partnership. This will help you think more of 'us' than 'I'. Find an investment niche you would like to start out together. Get a plan and begin to pursue it together and see it prepare you for a lifetime together as a team than as individuals.

Investing together will also mean having a shared account. Everything that pertains your business will involve both of you; from operations to budgeting the finances. This will unite you in mind and purpose and thus prepare you in a great way for a happy marriage. You will fight

through differences but with a sealed commitment to each other, you will get through them and emerge stronger and more inclined to each other.

### **Plan your wedding and marriage together**

Wedding and marriage are for both of you and you are the central players in it. Wedding plans will help you think of 'us' than 'I' because you are looking forward to enjoy the ceremony together. You are not considering visitors from your side alone but all the visitors who will attend your ceremony. Discuss and agree everything concerning your wedding together and it will greatly help you think of “you” as a couple and not as individuals.

Planning for marriage together will help you transit from thinking singular to plural. It is in these discussions you will realize that where you are going to, marriage, is about two single minded people and agreeing on everything. It will help you fight independence and self-centeredness. Every time you discuss about how you want to live out specific aspects of your lives, marriage will progressively tune up your minds to thinking of ‘we’. Since your aim as a couple is a happy marriage, these discussions will rule out individualistic mindset and prepare you for marriage faster.

### **Action Points**

- Begin to focus on you as a couple and not as an individual
- Choose not to be self-centered
- Pursue things that will help you think as a couple

## **CHAPTER 4: DISCUSS YOUR EXPECTATIONS IN MARRIAGE**

Each couple come into marriage with different expectations. When these expectations are not known, not fulfilling them is inevitable and failed expectations are a major cause of resentment and arguments between the two. If these expectations are not explicitly discussed beforehand, they can drive a wedge between couples and can even cause divorce. You want to prevent that from happening in your marriage; yes, differing in expectations are there, but what will you do with them? For you to have a happy marriage, you need to discuss your expectations before you get married to avoid them being the cause of unhappiness. Know what your partner expects of you as a spouse and your roles in the household. Then let them know your view on the same matter. Discuss your expectations and agree on how you will manage them as individuals and as a couple in order to meet the each other's needs.

These are the major expectations that if discussed will help you have a happy marriage:

### **Commitment to marriage**

Let your partner know what you understand commitment to marriage to means; the things that when done or not done shows commitment. Manage those expectations by allowing your spouse to explain to you how they understood them. Merge your expectations and come up with a new standard of commitment to marriage that will work for both of you and will result in a mutually fulfilling marriage.

### **Verbal affection**

Your spouse has an imagination of what verbal affection will be like in a marriage and their emotional fulfillment is heavily reliant on how you will fulfil those expectations. The probability is that if you do not know them, you will not fulfil them and thus leading to empty love tank. Discuss with your partner how they expect you to express love in words and begin working towards meeting those expectations. Set strategies to help you keep your affection constantly alive.

### **Physical intimacy**

This topic is hardly discussed by prospective couples and yet it comes with huge expectations that can injure a marriage. Know the desires, views and expectations of your partner in relation to hugging, holding hands, touching, kissing and sex among others. Agree on the extremes you cannot tolerate e.g. pornography in pursuit of physical intimacy in your marriage. Your spouse's sexual fulfillment is dependent on you meeting their expectations.

### **Respect for each other**

You partner understands things that speaks respect and disrespect differently from you. For you not to make them feel disrespected when you never meant it, it is necessary to allow each other

time to explain what communicates respect and disrespect from the start. Agree on how you are going to work on always showing respect and even how to communicate when you feel disrespected.

### **Spending quality time together**

You will have tens of hundreds of other activities needing your attention, but marriage comes first. If you want a happy marriage, you must discuss and agree on how you are going to schedule couple time in your busy schedules.

### **Place of family and friends in your marriage**

The moment your fiancé becomes a spouse it will not change the fact that they are a brother or sister, son or daughter and friend of other people. Those people still have a place in their life, and you need to agree on how you are going to handle each of them. Your spouse is primary and the rest including your parents, yes, your parents, and secondary relationships. Let your partner know how they expect you to prioritize them and your significant others; lest they feel you put all other people before them. Set beforehand boundaries so that the secondary relationships will not negatively influence or choke your marriage.

### **Finances**

The male spouse could be expecting his money to be 'his' money and her money to be 'her' money. Discuss your financial responsibilities and how you will meet them without making each other feel like a slave or undermined. Know what your spouse understands by family finances and how you are going to use the income that comes into your marriage. Change of mindset might be needed, come up with a mutual understanding of what family finances will mean in your marriage and how you are going to implement that. Walk through this discussion before you bring your finances together and before you get married.

### **Open conversations and decision making process**

Some men believe they will have the final say in marriage and some women believe that it is not the way to go. Understand the place of each spouse in decision making process and agree on how you are going to settle your decisions while ensuring each spouse's views are well taken care of. For happiness in marriage to happen, each spouse must feel their views, opinions, thoughts and needs are considered. Be willing to put in effort and selflessness to continually improve your conversations.

### **Appreciation and apology**

There will be lots of good things done to you in a marriage, but at the same time there will be wrongs done. People understand sincere appreciation and apology differently. You want your partner to know what sincere appreciation and apology looks like for you. Tell them how you

expect them to react when you do a good thing for them and how they should react when they are wrong. Learn each other's language of true appreciation and apology to meet your expectations appropriately.

### **Action Points**

- Each of you list your expectations
- Discuss the expectations
- Mutually agree on what you want to expect

## **CHAPTER 5: DISCUSS YOUR GOALS AS A MARRIED COUPLE**

What goals do you have for your future as a married couple? Almost every couple, if not all, have future goals, but often they are not discussed and hence a couple gets into marriage and each is pursuing the goals they had as singles; which is not what should be done in a marriage. A happy marriage's goals means two people who have brought together the personal goals they had while single and combining them to form a couple goals. This big list of goals, which you probably do not have a heart for all, is now your goals and you have no choice but to pursue them. Once you have combined your goals, discuss through each of them, and agree on how you are going to prioritize them without selfishness involved in the process. Some of your personal goals will be in the bottom of the list but that is okay, you are pursuing a happy marriage. Begin to own the goals irrespective of who brought them in and plan on how you will pursue them together in one's mind and heart.

Besides, the personal goals you will bring into marriage, there are other marriage goals which probably were not featured in personal goals. Define your goals for growing the marriage and plan how you will pursue them. These goals will bring you together in deep conversations and mutual dependency even before you get into marriage; you become aware beforehand what awaits you in marriage. Marriage goals will help you track the progress of your marriage amidst the busyness of life. These goals will set you on a road towards a happy marriage.

### **Financial goals**

Set smart financial goals and let them be long term. This is about the amount of finances you want to have in a year or so. This could mean discussing how you will work harder to get the extra income. Discuss the top things you want to spend your money on. This could be buy a house, a car, higher education and so forth. Use a budget so that you can always account for every coin that passes through your fingers, money in and money out at any given time.

### **Relationship goals**

Besides everything, you want to continually grow in knowledge and love for each other. Set your relationship goals that will guide you on pursuing your spouse even after saying 'I do'. These goals will help enhance your connection, feeling of being loved, level of intimacy and above all being happily married. These goals include how you are going to improve time together and transparency in conversation, grow in listening and understanding of your mate, improve your problem solving skills, improve on your household habits and to enhance communication and understanding of love to each other. These goals among others will help you grow closer over time and will have a direct effect on happiness of your marriage.

### **Health goals**

You want to live long to enjoy marriage together. Set goals of leading a healthy lifestyle. This could mean deciding on eating habits you want to embrace in your marriage and physical fitness

strategies to include in your regular routine. Agree on the weight control measures you will use and be accountable to each other.

### **Character development**

You want to continually improve yourselves. Two are a better that one; you can conquer bad habits and characters easily together than when alone. Be honest with each other and list all the negative traits you see in your partner and let them list those they see in you. Have long term goals towards getting rid of them. Take a negative trait in each other one at a time and support each other towards overcoming it. Find the most practical strategies against them then incorporate them in your daily lives and regularly assess your progress.

### **Spiritual goals**

Believing that you agreed on the faith you want to yield to in marriage. It will only be reasonable to set goals to continually grow in your faith. Understand where each of you is at right now and the long term results you would like to see in each other over time. Strategize on how you will work that out and support each other in growing closer to God. This could include deciding on the religious activities you want to commit yourselves to in order to grow spiritually. Stir each other to love, obedience and good works which will strengthen your walk of faith.

### **Career and academic goals**

Probably one of you would love to further their education or the other would like to take a different career path. Write down these goals and prioritize them based on your financial capacity. Support each other step into their career and/or academic goals and celebrate their wins. This will boost your family finances and your happiness as a couple.

### **Action Points**

- List your individual goals
- Merge the goals to get couple goals and prioritize them appropriately
- Plan how you will pursue each of them

## **CHAPTER 6: SET THE VALUES AND STANDARDS FOR YOUR MARRIAGE**

It is not good to live life based on your emotions and attitude of the day. This strategy will not lead to happy marriage because marriage is more of choosing to do everything right irrespective of what you feel at that moment. Values and standards will shape the life of your marriage in a certain way each day and will thus have an impact on the happiness therein. It will help you know what you should do in specific situation and what you should not do. It gives your marriage a standard to live by based on the results you want to see. These values will be passed on to your offspring and they will grow in them; this is how important values are. List all the values that are most important to you as individuals and discuss them to get a list of values of your marriage. These values should be indisputable in the heat of a moment, but instead will always bring you together in one accord.

Rank the following among the other values you have based on importance:

### **Honesty**

What level of honesty do you want to keep in your marriage? Agree how you will hold to the value of honesty and what will not be acceptable in your marriage.

### **Commitment**

Agree on what commitments you must keep towards each other and other people and the level of commitment in each case. This might change with time but have a standard of commitment for a start.

### **Fidelity**

If you do not have a place for unfaithfulness in marriage, set that value and standard before you get there. Set the boundaries you are allowing each other not to go past in your marriage relationship to people of the opposite gender. Agree on measures to put in place to help you fight infidelity.

### **Loyalty**

Define loyalty for your marriage and the level of loyalty you want to live by.

### **Love**

Beyond the love that brought you together, conscious decision to love each other will keep your love forever. Set a standard for love in your marriage; how you want to continue loving each other. Define unacceptable habits that do not speak love. Also extend this to how you want to love the people around you.

### **Generosity**



Agree on what giving will mean in your marriage. This is not just giving to each other but also the people around you. Will one give because they are given and not give when not given? Set a standard to guide you on how to give to each other and other people.

### **Kindness**

Kindness can be taken for granted. Discuss what kindness implies to you as a couple and what it does not. Build your relationship on a standard of kindness towards each other.

### **Peace**

A happy marriage is one full of love, joy and peace. You want to get to a peaceful home each day. Make peace a value in your marriage by stating how you want to hold peace in peaceful situations and those that possibly have no peace. Choose how you will react to bad situations as a couple.

### **Transparency**

Open up to each other's hearts without necessarily being asked to speak up. Choose to be transparent with each other. Transparency and honesty will strengthen your trust. Choose the standard of transparency you want to keep in your marriage.

### **Lifestyle**

Some people love simple lifestyle, while others love to live lavishly. How is it for you? Choose the best lifestyle you want to grow your marriage and children in. This will impact on how you spend your money; thus will always be significant in your budgeting.

### **Friendship**

Make friendship a value in your marriage and give it a standard. Your spouse is the foremost friend, how do you want to grow your friendship? Set a standard of friendship you want your marriage to run on.

### **Sacrifice**

A happy marriage is built on selflessness and sacrifice from both spouses. Make sacrifice a value you want to live by in your marriage and let the standard be mutual selfless love.

You can add to this list of values and personalize them as much as you want. Values and standards will keep your marriage under control in all seasons. They will instruct how you are supposed to behave in specific contexts and what you should not do. Pursuing these values together as a couple will give both of you a sense of respect and belonging, they will incline your hearts towards each other and in the direction of a happy and fulfilling marriage.

### **Action Points**

- Identify values each of you holds dear
- Discuss them and get a list of your values as a couple
- Begin to pursue those values in your relationship

## **CHAPTER 7: BE THE CHANGE YOU WANT TO SEE IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP**

Many are the times couples get into marriage with a list of things they expect their partner to change for the relationship to be happy. Leave alone marriage, even while courting, you might be having ideas of how to change your partner and bring the transformation you have always wanted in your relationship. Well, that will never happen. It is hard to change a thing in ourselves, how much more is it to change another person? Demanding change from your partner will cause unhealthy strain in your relationship. It is a sign that you have not accepted your partner as they are and implies that you will love them fully once they make the changes you are demanding.

To find the happiness you want in your marriage, be the change you want to see in your relationship. The easiest person to change is yourself and not your partner. Get into marriage assuming they will always be like that; have a zero expectation of change from their side. With such a mindset, getting the change you want will be easier. Your change will definitely influence your partner in the direction you want. You may be thinking that it is too much work for one person, what if they do not change? Be assured they will change; no human heart is unresponsive to unconditional love and full acceptance. The moment your partner is confident they have been accepted and loved as they are, they will want to do anything for the wellness of the relationship. They will pursue a happy marriage with you and for you.

Instead of trying to change your partner, do this instead:

### **Be a better partner**

You have probably heard of the phrase 'The omelet will be as good as the eggs used'. Your marriage will only be as good as you are right now. What you bring into marriage as an individual will affect the happiness in your marriage. Instead of thinking of how your partner can change and make your relationship better, the whole change is on your hands. Find the voices you have as a future husband or wife that will negatively affect your marriage. Decide to work on yourself as an individual. Prepare for your future role in the marriage by getting rid of every voice and strengthening your virtues. Strive to be the best version of yourself. Work on being the best person your partner can ever have for a spouse. This will make your partner want to measure up to your standards. When you are concentrating on being a better partner, you will surely feel happiness resonating in your relationship because you have zero expectations on your partner.

### **Take responsibility**

What is it that you feel is wrong in your relationship? Each one of you has a role to play in making that wrong right. At no point will it entirely be in the hands of one person to make the change happen. Take your place in the wrong, find out what you can do yourself to better the situation. Begin to do your part in making the change happen. Be faithful in doing this even if your partner does not respond in the same manner. By you taking action, the wrong thing won't

remain as it was and definitely your partner will notice the change at some point and thereafter, they will want to play their part. Dare be the first to do it!

### **Focus on the issue at hand**

The moment you are focusing on making your partner change, you fail to address the underlying issue. You miss the opportunity to work as a team to overcome the challenge. This will make it appear you are fighting against each other. Focus on the main issue that you want to see a change in, speak about it in 'I' statements. Tell your partner how you feel about that issue and what you want to see it change to. Suggest what you feel both of you can do to bring out the change. Never make it appear it is the fault of your spouse, even if it true, for the existence of the issue and so is their responsibility to make the change happen. Focus on the problem and let love for your partner be paramount.

### **Avoid blames**

In taking responsibility, you want to avoid shifting blames to your partner. Avoid the 'you' messages where all you say is 'you did this' and so forth. When the 'you' messages are used, you force the other person to incline to their natural orientation; to defend themselves. And the end of it will be a bad picture of endless rounds of blames. They feel criticized and their emotions unjustified. You do not want to make your partner feel as though they do not deserve to feel bad about your actions. Instead of starting the circle of 'you' messages, find something to apologize about. Remember a happy marriage will take your humility and putting your partner before you. Humble yourself and apologize that your partner feels the way they feel. If there is clarification you need to make, go ahead and clarify it. Be in the frontline of making the change you want to see.

### **Action Points**

- Identify where you want to see a change
- Choose to go first in making the change happen
- Play your part in bringing forth the change
- Be positive but do not demand your partner to change

## **CHAPTER 8: INITIATE AND FOLLOW THROUGH YOUR COMMITMENT**

Commitment is making a conscious choice to do whatever it takes to make a marriage work; a choice to love at all times. The level of your commitment to each other and the relationship will influence how you treat each other and hence affecting happiness in your future marriage. Being on the same page in regards to the permanence of marriage before you get there will help you sail through any challenge that comes your way before and in marriage. When both of you are committed to letting death alone part you, you will not have divorce or separation as an option and you will do anything within your power to make the marriage work. Knowing you are both committed to leading your relationship into marriage will give you confidence and increased fulfillment.

A happy marriage requires solid commitment from both partners. Knowing in your courtship that your futures are tied together, it will change how you act towards each other. It will also influence your decisions now. You will be more careful because hurting the other person means hurting your own self.

### **Making the initial commitment**

Making an initial commitment to stick by each other's side has been known to have a huge impact on happiness in marriage. Couples who cohabit before being officially married are known not to have made a solid commitment of a lifetime together. Beginning marriage on such a slate affects the marriage because it will continue on a weak commitment. Commitment is a process from when you decide to take your relationship beyond friendship to being engaged and is sealed when you get married. Cohabiting means you have not sealed your commitment and thus is not firmly founded. Couples who cohabit before marriage have poor dedication to each other, low confidence in the relationship which results in unhappiness in marriage. This is attributed to lack of clarity and mutual commitment when they began cohabiting. Transiting into marriage from cohabitation is more of sliding into marriage than deciding to get married. There is no distinct decision of getting into marriage and therefore the commitment is blurred.

If you want a happy marriage, you got to start it right; cohabitation is not the way to go. Mutually agree to get into marriage. Make a mutual, clear and firm commitment to forsake all others, be exclusively married to each other and to stay married till death do you part. Such a firm commitment will make both of you to be dedicated to each other and to the relationship. You will pursue each other relentlessly; you will fight through all huddles of life and make your marriage happy and fulfilling.

### **Follow on the commitment**

After making the initial commitment 'Till death do us part', it takes work to follow it through. Most couples who start off right believe in the permanency of marriage and no one thinks divorce can meet with them on the face; but divorces happen. Be informed that the happy

thereafter does not happen; it will take your effort and daily dying to self. To keep the commitment:

You will need to choose to love daily: Your spouse will wrong you many times and in ways you do not expect. The sweet in-love feeling will fade away and you will have to choose to love even when you do not feel like loving. You will need to force yourself into loving actions even when you feel otherwise. You will need to speak lovingly and with respect even when the voices in your head say differently. The thing is you will have to choose over and over again to love that person irrespective of situations.

Live like teammates and not opponents: You must recognize that your partner is your teammate; they are for you and not against you. When you believe that your partner has the best interests of you, you will not pick small fights and neither will you pursue small fights. You will fight everything that tries to come between you. You will want to resolve every difference as soon as possible.

Continue pursuing each other: The commitment of 'till death do us part' does not mean doors for pursuing each other are closed. If anything, you realize you have no other choice than to know and love that partner forever. Love will keep your commitment standing even as ages roll. Pursue actions that will keep your commitment alive and marriage exciting.

Set boundaries for your marriage: Do not allow third parties to suffocate your commitment to each other. Let friends and family friends be secondary and reduce their impacts on your primary relationship. Make your decisions as a couple and do not allow external people to negatively affect how you live your lives.

### **Action Points**

- Make a clear and firm initial commitment of a lifetime together
- Seal the commitment through official marriage ceremony
- Follow through your commitment in marriage

## **CHAPTER 9: START SERVING EACH OTHER NOW**

Are you looking forward to a happy marriage? Start serving each other now and make serving each other in marriage easier. This is because it is the way marriage works; it is designed to operate in this way. If we never needed to be served, then there was no need of a life partner in the first place. Each partner has what the other needs and the only way those things can be received is through service to one another. Second reason why marriage is about serving each other is because when two people are joined, they vow to forsake all others and be joined to this one person. This means you are the only person who is supposed to meet their needs.

With this understanding, it is important to know before you get married that you are going there to give and give again. Go with a mindset of giving and not receiving, your giving will be reciprocated to you. Serving each other is never easy, it means laying down your needs for the needs of your partner. This will not come so easily after a wedding ceremony. You are advised to start serving each other in your relationship now. These are ways you can serve each other now:

### **Pray for each other**

This is by far the most important way you can serve one another. You know the daily activities and struggles of your partner, why not take it upon yourself to pray for them. Help them bear the weight of life's burdens by carrying them in prayer. Pray for them to get through the challenges they are going through victoriously, petition for their favors before God, thank God for their achievement and whatever thing you feel you can pray for. The benefit of praying for your partner is that your spiritual connection grows stronger; you pull closer in spiritual level and will definitely translate to a strong emotional connection.

### **Support each other's dreams**

We all need support, more so does your partner needs you to support them. Give your ideas and views that better their dream. Seek opportunities to sell their expertise and push them ahead. Speak words of encouragement to them, more so when things are not going well. Empathize with their struggles as they make their dreams happen. Let them know you have their back and you will always celebrate every move they make and should they fall, you will catch them.

### **Look for ways to love them well**

You can serve your partner now by being intentional in looking for better ways to improve your love. Identify their primary love language and go out of your way to speak love in it in every special way possible. Go that extra mile to ensure you love them well and they are aware you are doing this for them. Also concerning special dates like birthdays, be careful to remember them. Celebrate them in the most creative and affordable ways you can. Use creative gifts to commemorate their special dates.

### **Do what they want to do**

What is that project they want to start or have started? You do not have to know it all to be of help in that project. Look for ways you can chip in and be of help. It might not be your area of expertise but look for the part of their work (it will always be there) that needs little or no specialized expertise. Offer the little support you can offer as they do their thing and in this way, you are serving them. Your presence in that place makes it easy for them. Such activities done together will create sense of intimacy and support for each other.

### **Make that special thing**

This could be a specific treat they love, a meal, adventure and so on. Know what your partner loves specifically from you and regularly as possible do that for them. It will cost you time, money and energy but serving one another is all about that.

These are just but a few ways you can serve one another. Be creative and look for ways and opportunities to give the service. Learn to put their needs before yours even before you officially get married. Let serving them come out of love and pure joy. Do not keep a record of how you have served them to expect to be served in the same measure; that will not be out of loving intentions. Make serving one another central in your relationship and it will not be a hard task in marriage.

### **Action Points**

- Choose to serve your partner
- Identify areas and ways you can serve them
- Serve them in love and pure joy



## **CHAPTER 10: KEEP DOING THE THINGS THAT ATTRACTED YOU TO EACH**

### **OTHER FIRST**

There is always that one thing or set of things that attracts people to each other. It could be when you first saw them doing a performance somewhere, in a classroom setting, in religious circles or wherever place you met. It is true that what a person saw and fell in love with first is what will elate them throughout their time together. That is the thing that will excite them every time they experience with you. So how will you keep doing them unless you are first aware what they are? Ask your partner to tell you what attracts them the most about you. It could be a personality, physical appearance, how you do certain things and/or your skills and expertise.

To keep the attraction alive now and even in marriage:

#### **Keep physical attraction alive**

Physical attraction is not the backbone that keeps the marriage happy but without doubt has a great input in the level of intimacy and fulfilment in your marriage. Physical attraction is among the primary things that brought you together in the first place and when it is no longer there, any form of intimacy becomes weak and your connection starts to break. It is true you will not look the same forever, but taking care of your physical appearance is very crucial. And since even your partner will age, their view of physical attraction will change and be more accommodative. The following will help you be physically attractive:

#### **Control your weight**

Marriage and children do not license you to lose control of your physical appearance. You must put in measures to control your weight, keep healthy eating habits and physical exercises. Change in physical appearance is inevitable but always maintain good appearance in whatever stage of life.

#### **Dress nicely**

Besides keeping weight under control, practice modesty; mind how you dress. Get rid of old and worn out outfits that makes your look unattractive. Find fitting outfits, put on makeup and perfume. Do whatever is in your capacity to look good. You may ask your partner to tell you the outfits they feel more attracted to you when you put on. Also take their requests on hair styles and other specifics.

#### **Maintain hygiene**

It is possible in marriage to lose sight of your hygiene. Early in marriage, couples are more cautious on showering often and keeping themselves neat. But as time goes by, this is easily forgotten. Make hygiene routines in your marriage so that you can maintain the neatness of your body.

## **Maintain good character**

It is said that physical attraction attracts a partner, but character keeps them. It is true character that plays a huge role in maintaining a happy marriage. What is that character that has kept your partner attracted to you? Know that specific character and maximize on it.

Habits grow into character. Stop annoying and negative habits that can negatively affect your marriage. To get your character inline, ask them to give you a list of habits they would appreciate if you change and those they love about you. Work on getting rid of the negative list and improve the positive habits.

## **Continue pursuing your passion and purpose**

Before getting married, it is necessary you find your purpose and passion in life. What are the things you can do comfortably and to the best standard even without a pay? Figure this out and begin to walk in it. It will give you fulfilment and sense of direction in life. When you are aware of your purpose and you begin to walk in it, marriage will not deter your progress, instead it will enhance it.

It is attractive for your partner to find you busy in your area of purpose. They will not find an idle person who needs someone to psyche them up; instead, they will find a person with vision and a positive future. This is attractive, don't you think so?

## **Be confident in who you are**

Find your identity, know who you are. There is no one on earth who wants to live with a person who depends on them to be confident. Know your identity, be aware of who you are, know your strengths and weaknesses. When you are self-aware, you will not depend on another person to complete you because you will find your own completion and confidence. A confident person is collected and is not seeking justification from other people. I believe this is attractive.

### **Action Points**

- Identify the thing that attracts your partner to you the most
- Find ways to be exceptionally good at that thing
- Maintain your physical appearance, pursue your passion and be confident in who you are

## **CHAPTER 11: COMMUNICATE LOVE EFFECTIVELY TO THEM**

A happy marriage is when the two partners feel most loved by the other and the happiness weakens when one or both begin to feel they are taken for granted. Before marriage and first years of marriage, the in-love feeling is still alive. But as time goes by in marriage, the feeling will surely disappear, and it is possible for a couple to drift away because they no longer feel loved like before. The things they did for each other to communicate love in those days are replaced by kids, activities and busy schedules. Seemingly, there is a secret thought that we got them and that is it. But as we have discussed in the past chapters, the kind of love that will keep your marriage happy is more of choice than the good feeling. Choose to love your partner the right way from courtship and forever, they need to feel loved even years after I do.

To communicate love well, it is necessary to know the love language of your partner. You will only communicate love effectively if you are aware of what makes them feel loved. Establish a deep emotional connection through effective love communication. When this emotional connection is firmly established and kept, without doubt the marriage will be full of love and happiness. It is important you note that your partner's primary love language will not change after marriage; what you do now to make them feel loved is what they want you to do even in marriage. Identify your partner's primary love language before marriage, start practicing how to speak it now and then follow it on even in marriage. These are the five love languages by Gary Chapman:

### **Words of affirmation**

Words of affirmation are timely verbalized compliments that build your partner. They include encouraging and positive words that make them know you are confident in who they are. It is simply affirming in words the love you have for them. If your partner is elated by compliments, words of affirmation probably is their love language. Seize opportunities to give a timely compliment. It does not necessarily have to be over big things but being careful to identify small things to compliment them about will make them feel most loved by you.

### **Quality time**

Quality time means giving your partner undivided attention and not just physical presence. This might need you to sharpen your listening skills to be able to allow them to share their heart's emotions with you, without being distracted and be convinced they are heard. As you prepare for marriage, give quality time to your partner, go on dates regularly and speak this love language to your partner if it means a world to them.

### **Receiving gifts**

It is true in any relationship, receiving gifts regularly is necessary. But for a person whom this is what deeply speaks love to them, you have to go an extra mile to give them gifts. The thing is, they do not have to be expensive gifts, you can be creative and use what you already have. It

could be writing a sweet letter or message, natural flowers in your garden and anything you know they will appreciate. Make sure every time you are going to meet them you have a gift for them.

### **Acts of service**

Acts of service include any service give your partner that will speak love to them. You will have to humble yourself to a level of servant in order to speak this love language. This can be limited now that you are not always together, but as much as you can, find ways to serve them. Ask them what you can do for them to make their life lighter and follow on by giving those services.

### **Physical touch**

Physical touch is the intimate touch you give to your partner that communicates emotional love. It is important to note that you will be limited on how to speak this language because you are not yet married, and you do not want to cross borders before time. Discuss and agree with your partner how far you want to go with physical touch and be extra cautious not to let things fall apart.

Now that you know the five love languages, begin the process of discovering your partner's love language. It may not be quite easy because you do not know each other quite well at this level. But with their help, you can discover them. Ask them what makes them feel most loved by you what you do or say. Let them direct you on the language that communicates love to them. Begin speaking it even though constrained by physical distance. The more you speak it, the more you become perfect in communicating love. This will make your emotional connection firm and will be easy to communicate love to them in marriage. Even as busyness of life will kick in, you will be aware of how to keep their love tank full. Even when you fail, you will not waste a lot of time in conflicts and resentment because you know how to get love back on the right track. This will help make your marriage happy and fulfilling.

### **Action Points**

- Discover your partner's primary love language
- Practice speaking it
- Regularly confirm with your partner how much they feel loved

## **CHAPTER 12: DISCUSS THE MOST ESSENTIAL TOPICS BEFORE GETTING**

### **MARRIED**

When the in-love obsession reigns, you are just happy and want to get married soonest. You cannot think rationally concerning real issues of life because you think you will always be in love. The reality is that you will not always have that sweet feeling. As soon as you tie the knot, realities about your spouse will dawn on you and it may blow out to serious arguments that have potential of breaking your marriage. To avoid such big surprises in marriage, it is necessary you discuss the most essential topics that will affect your marriage. Find a safe ground for both of you concerning each of these topics.

Here are the most essential topics you must discuss before you say ‘I do’:

#### **Your past**

Each of you has a past. It can be filled with pain and regrets or joy and hope. Whichever form it takes, you must discuss your history. This is because your past plays a role in shaping your present and future. It explains why you do things the way you and why you react the way you do to different matters. Discuss your family history, past romantic relationships, past life experiences and any other significant experience which has shaped who you are today. This will help you know the baggage each of you has and you are able to deal with any negative things that should be dealt with before marriage.

#### **Children**

Discuss whether both of you would love to have children. If so, how many children and what age difference do you want between them. Also, when do you want to have the first child and by when do you want to be done with childbearing. If you do not want children, what measures will you use to ensure you do not have them? In case you want children and you fail to get them what will you do? Are you open to adoption if you cannot conceive naturally and after that, how long will you consider adoption if you fail to conceive?

#### **Home and location**

Discuss the kind of house you want to live in. Is it a mansion or a bungalow? Though you may never live in your dream home, it will help you focus on the same direction. Where do you want to settle in? Which country and which town? And if you do not want to settle in one specific place, how do you want to manage movement from a place to another. Location to settle will be determined by various factors like job offer, closeness of other family members, the kind of schools and environment you want to raise your kids and so forth.

## **Religion**

Do you both believe in religion? If so, discuss the faith or religion each of you is inclined to. If it is same faith, how important is it to you and how much are you committed to it. To what extent will it have impact on your marriage. If you are inclined to different faiths, how will you manage that? How will you raise and teach your children concerning religion? This can be so tough especially if the religions you are inclined to oppose each other in beliefs. You must agree on how you will handle religion before it blows your union.

## **Career and finances**

First be honest if anyone has an outstanding debt. What is the amount of the debt and what are the plans for paying it off.

Discuss whether both of you will take full time job. And if so, how will you balance between job and family responsibilities. If you want to work from home or start your own business, put up strategies. Concerning finances, will you have a shared bank account or will each of you manage personal accounts? If you will have a common account, how will you manage withdrawals? If decide on different accounts, how will you manage transparency with your finances? Discuss how you will pay your bills. Will you share bills, or will you pay separately? How will you manage emergencies and running short of funds? What is your savings and investment plans?

## **Household chores**

One partner should not feel they are a slave in their own home. How will you take care of chores, laundry, trash, groceries, mopping, dishes and all the rest? Discuss how you will help each other around the house and make your home a home of rest.

## **Sex**

People have different views of sex and sexuality and this affect sex life in marriage. Discuss your views on sex and sexuality. Be open on your sexual history and how it might affect your relationship. Discuss your expectations on sex and how you will fulfil your sexual needs in marriage. Also, how will you guard yourselves against infidelity?

## **Boundaries**

Discuss what is okay and what is not okay for your relationship and marriage. Which boundaries do you need to set with friends of opposite gender, what is your relationship with past boyfriends and girlfriends and what is the influence of your families on your relationship? Find ways to protect your relationship, take care of your emotions and prevent your bodies from being in contact with other people negatively.

## **Extended Family**

Getting married means your family circle is twice large. Discuss what role will your families play in your marriage and decisions. Will you host any family member at any given point? If so, how will you ensure they do not strain your marriage? How regular will visits be done to family members? Concerning family traditions, will you continue the traditions of any of your families? Will you merge and come up with your own traditions or will you start your own traditions? This topic's intensity will vary if you are doing interracial or same race marriage.

### **Action Points**

- List the essential topics you want to discuss
- Discuss the topics in detail
- Agree on how you will handle each of them
- Keep finding other essential topics and discuss them

### **About The Author**

Omer Kelly enjoys a successful marriage relationship for over 40 years now. He wrote personal journals since the early years of his marriage life. These journals highlight the ups and downs, conflicts and resolutions he experienced during his marriage life. His aspirations are to offer to all married couples strategies for a less stressful and a lifelong happy marriage.



**Other Books By: Omer Kelly**

The Lifelong Marriage: 12 Ways To A Happy Marriage Life

[The Lifelong Marriage: 12 Ways To Revive Love In A Marriage](#)

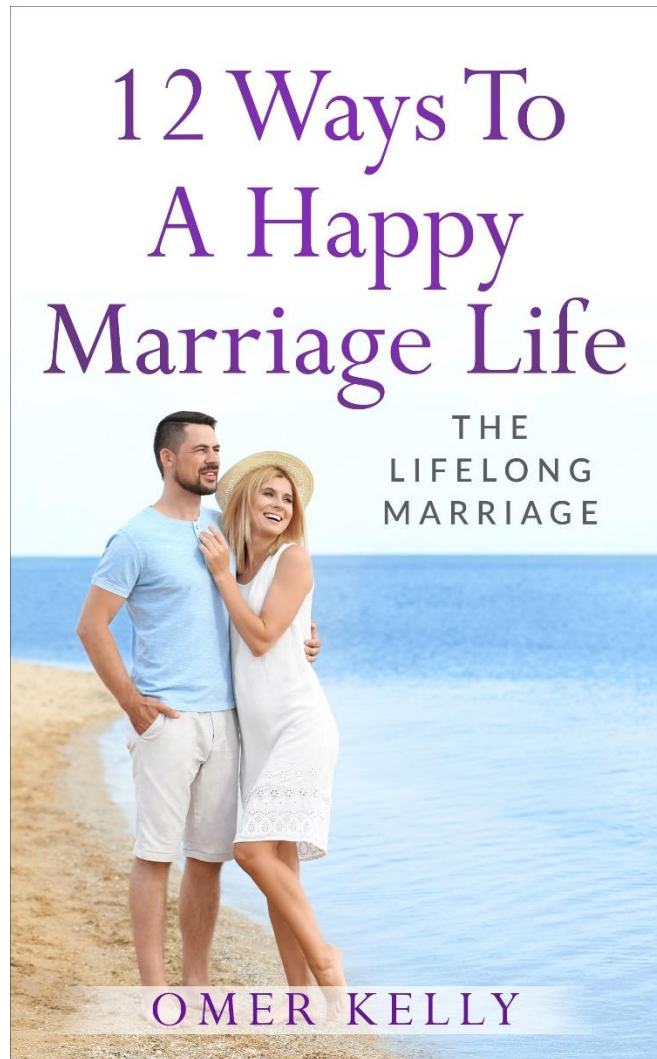
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